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ABSTRACT

The mission of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning includes maintaining cultural literacy and strengthening educational programs for American-affiliated Pacific Islanders. On islands where no substitute teacher pool is available, students' educational opportunities may be seriously compromised. Policymakers and program managers in all 10 political entities were concerned about teacher and administrator absenteeism as well as teacher stress or burnout. The current study attempted to determine the risk factors for Pacific school teachers and administrators and identify which of these lead to absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout. In the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, surveys were sent to elementary teachers, secondary teachers, and school administrators of all 14 schools. The first section gathered demographic information, number of absences, and reasons for absences in the 1996-97 school year. The second section used the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The third section required respondents to estimate when they might leave their positions and what reasons they might have. Absenteeism was low and determined not to be a problem. Potential leavers cited stress, students' bad attitudes, disagreements about how to teach, not enough supplies, and too many responsibilities as primary reasons to leave. However, teachers and administrators experienced less burnout than their mainland counterparts. Appended are the RAPSTA Teacher Questionnaire and the RAPSTA School Administrator Questionnaire. (Contains 17 references, 8 tables, and 6 figures.) (RKJ)

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ED 458 702

RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF PACIFIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS (RAPSTA) STUDY

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

Research and Development Cadre

May 1998

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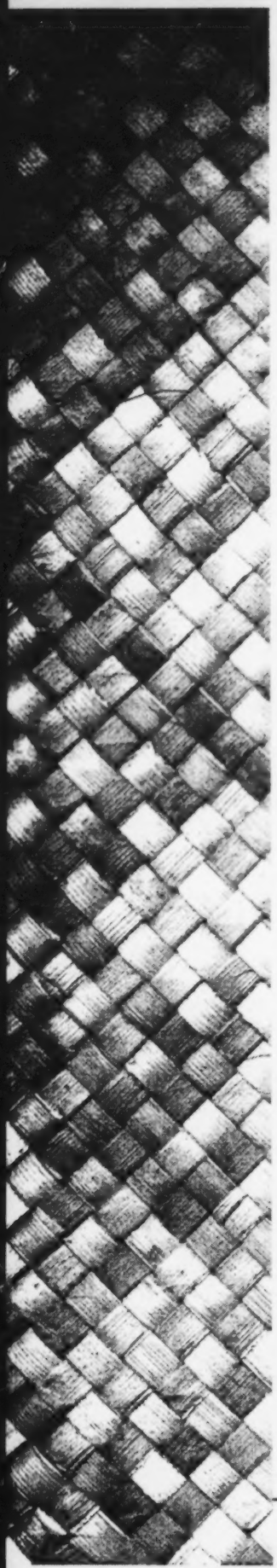

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study

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Preface

This study represents one step towards solving problems that plague many schools throughout the Pacific: high rates of absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators. The data collected in this study reveal the extent of these problems and shed some light on possible contributing factors.

During coming months, R&D Cadre members will present this report to teachers and school administrators in each Pacific entity, soliciting feedback and suggestions that we anticipate will lead to the formulation of specific, entity-based solutions to these concerns.

I. Introduction

The mission of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) is to *assist education, government, community agencies, businesses, and labor groups to maintain cultural literacy and improve the quality of life by helping to strengthen educational programs and processes for children, youth, and adults* (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 1996).

In order to carry out this mission, PREL has made a commitment to work in close partnership with the ten American-affiliated Pacific entities: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. As a result of their very different forms of political affiliation with the United States, these ten states are referred to as *entities* in PREL's terminology.

As part of this work, PREL's Research and Development (R&D) Cadre has undertaken several studies in order to describe the educational experiences and opportunities of Pacific Islanders. The R&D Cadre is a group of Pacific educators consisting of one member from each department or ministry of education in the ten entities comprising PREL's service region, and one member representing the National Department of Education, Federated States of Micronesia.

Each entity has formed a local support team of researchers who assist the cadre member in carrying out research studies. The local R&D support teams range in size from five to thirteen members.

One of the studies conducted, *A Study of Risk Factors Among High School Students in the Pacific Region* (Pacific Region Educational Laboratory R&D Cadre, 1995), sparked interest in examining risk factors associated with adults working in Pacific schools. Open-ended questions answered by students participating in the 1995 study indicated that these students were concerned about teacher absenteeism. In entities where no substitute teacher pool is available, students' educational opportunities may be seriously compromised due to high rates of teacher absenteeism.

Frequent teacher absenteeism in the Pacific may have a strong impact on student achievement. For various reasons, such as lack of funds or human resources, substitute-teacher programs are lacking in many entities. Students might come to school, but a teacher might not be available to teach them. Not only does this affect access to educational opportunities and contribute to low student achievement, it could also have an effect on attendance counts, which can adversely affect school funding, thus perpetuating a negative cycle.

Factors related to teacher and school administrator absenteeism have been identified in research conducted in American schools. However, similar research is lacking for the Pacific region. As a result, the PREL Board of Directors recommended follow-up research detailing risk factors for teachers and school administrators. This recommendation was supported by the R&D Cadre members, who expressed interest in examining these risk factors within their respective entities. In addition, policy makers and program managers in the ten entities have expressed concern about the impact of teacher and administrator absenteeism, as well as attrition and stress/burnout, on student achievement.

In response to these concerns, a study was designed to describe the factors that affect Pacific Island educators and make them "at risk" for absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1997) defines stress as "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily and mental tension." Research indicates that excessive stress might cause illness.

A condition termed "burnout" (DeRobbio, 1995) could also result from difficult and stressful work conditions. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines this condition as "exhaustion of

physical or emotional strength."

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What are the risk factors that affect Pacific school teachers and administrators?
2) What risk factors lead to absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout?

Of particular interest to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is determining why there have been high turnover rates among recruited teachers, and uncovering the extent and factors affecting educator burnout and absenteeism. Approximately 23 percent of CNMI's teaching staff leaves each year. The CNMI Public School System (PSS) spends more than $.5 million on recruitment annually, with 60 percent of the new teachers coming from the U.S. Mainland. Attrition in the CNMI is a very costly matter.

This study was designed to identify risk factors affecting educators in the CNMI and other Pacific entities served by PREL. As part of the process, a literature review of teacher risk factors was performed and published (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). This review concluded that:

1) Factors associated with teacher absenteeism – such as child care, transportation difficulties, illness, and cultural demands – tend to be immediate obligations or concerns (Scott & Wimbush, 1991).

2) Factors associated with attrition – such as low salaries, poor benefits, and work overload – are chronic or habitual concerns (Wari, 1993).

3) Factors associated with stress/burnout – such as student misbehavior (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Pelletier, 1977; American Psychiatric Association, 1994); anger, anxiety, or depression (DeRobbio & Iwanicki, 1996); and school reform (Farber & Ascher, 1992) – are daily nuisances.

These risk factors might also play a role in teacher and school administrator absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout in the Pacific region with its unique educational, cultural, and geographical contexts. Pacific schools have adopted the American system of education. However, this transplanted system exists parallel to a Pacific orientation and heritage influenced by Polynesian and Micronesian traditional values, cultural events, and environmental circumstances. Some examples include the following, which were taken from a review of the literature and interviews with Pacific educators:

Cultural events. In some island communities, traditional feasts and funerals are important parts of village life. For instance, if a feast falls on a school day, it is likely that the teacher (who may hold a traditional title) will not go to school, but will prepare for the event. Family relationships with their attendant obligations are highly valued and honored among Pacific Islanders and may account for higher absenteeism rates among Pacific educators.

Family and village social roles. In many island communities, family and village relationships provide a social context that may overlook frequent absenteeism. For example, a teacher may be a member of a large and influential family, many of whom may be employed in the public school system. That teacher's absenteeism may, therefore, be overlooked. Although the traditional American ethic views such favoritism as inappropriate, it may be tolerated within the context of many Pacific lifestyles.

Environmental factors. Unique weather patterns such as hurricanes and "super-typhoons" in the Pacific region may have an effect on absenteeism. Typhoon Paka, for example, recently

decimated Guam, leaving it without electricity and forcing the closure of schools. In Hawai'i, giant winter swells may close roadways and limit access to schools. Flooding in low-lying islands and atolls can cause many teachers to miss school for one or more days.

The main purpose of this study was to raise awareness of risk factors affecting educators in the Pacific entities and to provide insight necessary to address the concerns of students, policy makers, and educators throughout the region. Hopefully, the results will stimulate interest and follow-up action as it relates to local professional development opportunities for Pacific educators.

Because of the region's remote geographical location and its distance from educator training programs, as well as the high costs associated with traveling to institutions of higher education, local departments of education must share responsibility for the development of programs or interventions geared towards maintaining the educational work force. Preventing the negative outcomes associated with risk factors can help educators to become more effective while working with their students and thus promote positive student outcomes. The study will also contribute to the fund of knowledge on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among educators generally, and Pacific educators specifically, thereby contributing to cross-cultural theory building. This, in turn, may assist the development of models and tools for promoting retention and reducing attrition and stress/burnout among educators in the Pacific and elsewhere.

II. Methods

The *Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators* (RAPSTA) study was conducted in ten American-affiliated Pacific entities during the spring of 1997. It was designed and conducted by PREL's R&D Cadre and its members' local support teams. PREL staff provided technical assistance.

R&D Cadre members participated in three PREL-sponsored seminars in which they designed the study, developed data collection instruments, and analyzed the data. Cadre members then shared the collected information with their local R&D support teams.

Subjects

The unit of analysis for the RAPSTA study is the elementary and secondary-level teacher and school administrator. In the CNMI, 441 teacher surveys were distributed, and 332 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a 75 percent response rate. Twenty-nine school administrator surveys were distributed, and 20 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a 69 percent response rate.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize demographic characteristics of the subjects.

Table 1

Characteristics of RAPSTA Teacher Sample from the CNMI

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	181	54.5
	Male	125	37.7
	No Response	26	7.8
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Black American	5	1.5
	Carolinian	1	0.3
	Caucasian	154	46.4
	Chamorro	42	12.7
	Filipino	38	11.4
	FSM	10	3.0
	Palauan	21	6.3
	Samoan	8	2.4
	Mixed	13	3.9
	Other	12	3.6
	No Response	28	8.4
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Age	20 to 29	74	22.3
	30 to 39	103	31.0
	40 to 49	71	21.4
	50+	66	19.9
	No Response	18	5.4
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	105	31.6
	Married	161	48.5
	Separated	6	1.8
	Divorced	29	8.7
	Widowed	5	1.5
	No Response	26	7.8
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	4	1.2
	Associate Degree	8	2.4
	Bachelor's Degree	203	61.1
	Master's Degree	79	23.8
	Advanced Degree	0	0.0
	Other	14	4.2
	No Response	24	7.2
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	116	34.9
	5 - 10 Years	98	29.5
	11 - 14 Years	28	8.4
	15 - 20 Years	33	9.9
	20+ Years	43	13.0
	No Response	14	4.2
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**
Salary	< 25,000	21	6.3
	25,000-29,999	52	15.7
	30,000-34,999	84	25.3
	35,000-39,999	37	11.1
	40,000-44,999	53	16.0
	45,000+	30	9.0
	No Response	55	16.6
	TOTAL	**332**	**100.0**

* refers to the Federated States of Micronesia: Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap States

The majority of teachers are married Caucasian females, between the ages of 30 to 49 years, with a bachelor's degree (61.1%) and one to ten years of teaching experience.

Table 2

Characteristics of RAPSTA School Administrator Sample from the CNMI

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	12	60.0
	Male	7	35.0
	No Response	1	5.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Carolinian	1	5.0
	Caucasian	3	15.0
	Chamorro	10	50.0
	Filipino	2	10.0
	Mixed	1	5.0
	Other	2	10.0
	No Response	1	5.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Age	20 to 29	0	0.0
	30 to 39	5	25.0
	40 to 49	11	55.0
	50+	4	20.0
	No response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	0	0.0
	Married	16	80.0
	Separated	1	5.0
	Divorced	2	10.0
	Widowed	1	5.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	0	0.0
	Associate Degree	0	0.0
	Bachelor's Degree	8	40.0
	Master's Degree	11	55.0
	Other	1	5.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	0	0.0
	5 - 10 Years	1	5.0
	11 - 14 Years	2	10.0
	15 - 20 Years	8	40.0
	20+ Years	9	45.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**
Salary	30,000-34,999	2	10.0
	35,000-39,999	3	15.0
	40,000-44,999	12	60.0
	45,000+	3	15.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**20**	**100.0**

Most school administrators are married Chamorro females between the ages of 40 to 49 years, with a master's degree (55.0%), and more than 15 years of experience.

Sampling

The CNMI chose to have all classroom teachers and school administrators across its 14 schools included in this study. Due to easy school access, surveying all classroom teachers and school administrators did not present a problem.

Instrumentation

Two similar data collection instruments were developed, one for teachers and another for school administrators (see Appendices). Each is a five-page survey with three sections: Section 1 consists of 2-1/2 pages of forced-choice and short-answer, self-reported background information as well as absenteeism data for the school year in which the survey was administered. Section 2 is a single-page rating sheet outlining stress/burnout feelings; it was adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey and Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Section 3 is also a single-page rating sheet detailing reasons why an educator might quit teaching or working as a school administrator. Individuals did not identify themselves by name, and all responses were kept confidential.

Section 1 - Demographic Characteristics and Absenteeism Data

Section 1 gathered relevant personal information to be used in examining teacher/school administrator retention and attrition. Questions asked about gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, salary, experience, and current teaching load. Additional data on the number of instructional days away from school during the 1996-1997 school year (SY) and the reasons for those absences were collected. For example, participants were asked to write down the number of days they were away from school in SY 1996-1997 for reasons such as funerals, birthdays, storms, heavy rains, or floods.

Section 2 - Stress and Burnout Ratings

The purpose of Section 2, as a means of measuring employee stress/burnout, was to discover how respondents view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is recognized as the leading measure of burnout. "It is the best known and most widely used questionnaire for the assessment of individual occupational burnout among human service workers and others whose work involves intense interaction with people" (Offerman, 1986, p. 419). The MBI is a 22-item, self-report inventory of three subscales, which were developed to measure dimensions that the authors felt best defined burnout. These subscales include Low Personal Accomplishment (8 items), Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), and Depersonalization (5 items).

- Low Personal Accomplishment results when teachers evaluate themselves negatively, particularly in relation to their work with students (DeRobbio, 1995). Those who report low personal accomplishment may disagree with the statement, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in teaching" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

- Emotional Exhaustion "is the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained. When these feelings become chronic, educators find they can no longer give of themselves to students as they once could" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). They may agree with the statement, "I feel I'm working too hard on my job" (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p. 2).

- Depersonalization results when educators "no longer have positive feelings about their students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter,

1996, p. 28). They may develop negative or cynical attitudes and feelings about them and may agree with the statement, "I don't really care what happens to some of my students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

Respondents rated each of the 22 items in terms of the frequency that these feelings occur, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6).

To make the survey instrument more appropriate to the Pacific region, the MBI–Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986) and the MBI–Human Services Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) were adapted, with permission from the publisher. Seven of the 22 items were modified to clarify vocabulary and idiomatic phrases. Since many of the respondents in the Pacific entities speak English as a second or foreign language, words such as "exhilarated" and "callous," or expressions such as "at the end of my rope" were stated in more understandable terms. These modifications were made by two Pacific-entity educators who are familiar with the English proficiency of teachers in the region. It was determined that these language-clarifying changes would not significantly alter the instrument's technical qualities. The MBI has been validated for use in countries around the world in a number of translations (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 1).

Section 3 - Reasons for Leaving the Profession

The purpose of Section 3 was to understand why teachers and school administrators leave their jobs. Respondents were asked to rate each of 19 statements on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." For example, teachers rated their level of agreement with two statements: "I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years" and "I might leave teaching altogether within the next two years." They were also asked to rate their agreement by noting reasons why they might quit teaching. Reasons for leaving the profession, as listed on the survey, were selected because of their prevalence in attrition literature. Additional reasons were included on the basis of their perceived importance by educators in the Pacific region.

Procedures

The R&D Cadre members and their local support teams coordinated the survey administration. They planned meetings to inform school staff about the RAPSTA study, its purpose, rationale for the selection of schools, and the importance of serious responses to the survey. In these meetings, schedules for data collection were developed and confirmed. Plans for necessary logistical support and accommodations were also communicated to the staff.

An important part of these procedures was the administration of the survey instruments. In the CNMI, each school's classroom teachers met with the local R&D support team members who distributed the survey, waited for it to be completed, collected responses, and placed the surveys in a large envelope that was provided. The above procedure was followed at all schools, with the exception of three schools served by one team member. At these three schools, the team member distributed the teacher survey to all staff, not just the classroom teachers. Total staff at these schools included regular classroom teachers, teacher aides, school aides, and cultural informants. For school administrators, the support team distributed surveys during a scheduled administrators' meeting. Surveys were personally delivered to those principals who were not at the administrators' meeting.

The data were collected from April 1997 to June 1997, giving adequate time for personnel to complete the surveys and time for PREL staff to follow up on the status of returned surveys. Surveys were collected after being completed by each school's teachers and administrators. The local support team collected the completed surveys, then forwarded them to PREL in Honolulu for data entry and preliminary analysis.

III. Findings

This section features general findings on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in the CNMI. It highlights findings in three areas: (1) reasons for school absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition in the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

Reasons for School Absences

During the 1996-1997 school year, teachers in the CNMI sample were away from work, on average, for a total of 6.87 days. School administrators in the sample were away from work, on average, for a total of 13.65 days. Table 3 provides reasons why teachers were away from work and frequency of absence. Table 4 provides reasons why school administrators were away from work and frequency of absence.

Table 3
Reasons Why Teachers Are Away from School in the CNMI

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Personal illness	2.26
2	Vacation	1.44
3	Meetings and workshops	0.86
4	Funerals	0.66
5	Other	0.38
6	Family member sick	0.34
7	Maternity leave	0.17
8	Training leave	0.12
8	Administrative leave	0.12
9	Stress	0.09
10	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	0.07
10	Family responsibilities	0.07
11	Working conditions	0.05
11	Weddings	0.05
11	Educational leave	0.05
12	Child care	0.04
13	Paternity leave	0.02
13	Relationship with supervisors	0.02
13	Relationship with co-workers	0.02
14	Jury duty	0.01
14	Community responsibilities	0.01
14	Church activities	0.01
14	Birthdays	0.01
15	Transportation problem	0.00
15	Suspension	0.00
15	Military training	0.00
15	Lack of instructional materials	0.00
	TOTAL	**6.87**

In the CNMI, personal illness was the leading cause of teacher absence from school, with 2.26 days away. The next highest reason was vacation, with an average of 1.44 days; followed by meetings and workshops, with an average of .86 days.

Table 4
Reasons Why School Administrators Are Away from School in the CNMI

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Meetings and workshops	7.55
2	Training leave	1.65
3	Personal illness	1.10
4	Administrative leave	1.00
5	Funerals	0.90
6	Other	0.45
7	Family responsibilities	0.40
8	Vacation	0.20
9	Family member sick	0.15
10	Community responsibilities	0.10
11	Stress	0.05
11	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	0.05
11	Birthdays	0.05
12	Working conditions	0.00
12	Weddings	0.00
12	Transportation problem	0.00
12	Suspension	0.00
12	Relationship with supervisors	0.00
12	Relationship with co-workers	0.00
12	Paternity leave	0.00
12	Military training	0.00
12	Maternity leave	0.00
12	Lack of instructional materials	0.00
12	Jury duty	0.00
12	Educational leave	0.00
12	Church activities	0.00
12	Child care	0.00
	TOTAL	**13.65**

CNMI school administrators were most frequently away from school due to meetings and workshops, with an average of 7.55 days. This was followed by training leave, with an average of 1.65 days, and personal illness, with an average of 1.10 days.

Reasons for Attrition in the Education Profession

Respondents rated 17 reasons for leaving teaching or administration on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In order to judge the technical significance of corre-

lations between responses on each item, this ordinal scale was collapsed into two categories: "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were counted as DISAGREE; "strongly agree" and "agree" were counted as AGREE. Percentage of agreement was then calculated for each reason.

In the CNMI, 20.48 percent (N=68) of all teachers agreed that they might leave teaching within the next two years. For purposes of analysis, two categories were created: Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave teaching within the next two years." Table 5 ranks the reasons teachers gave for leaving teaching, comparing Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

Poor working conditions, no support from school administration, and no support from central office were ranked as the top three reasons for leaving teaching in the CNMI, both by teachers who were planning to leave and by those who were not.

Table 5

Reasons for Leaving Teaching in the CNMI

If I quit teaching, it would be because of ...	Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions	65.6	3	54.8	2
no support from school administration	67.2	1	66.5	1
no support from central office	66.2	2	66.5	1
too much stress *	61.5	4	45.4	3
poor relationships with parents	20.6	14	24.3	13
students' bad attitudes **	48.4	7	30.6	10
my lack of control over school policies	50.8	6	43.4	4
poor benefits	29.0	12	27.4	12
personal health problems **	14.3	15	40.2	6
too many disagreements about how to teach *	25.8	13	14.8	14
not enough school materials and supplies **	58.5	5	38.4	8
low salaries	41.5	9	38.2	9
too many responsibilities *	44.6	8	28.0	11
pressure from the community	11.1	16	13.6	16
retirement	32.3	10	41.8	5
promotion	31.8	11	39.8	7
poor relationship with other teachers	7.8	17	13.9	15

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

A statistical test (Chi^2) was performed to find out whether the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different for each possible reason for leaving teaching. Potential Leavers are more likely to leave for the following reasons: too much stress, students' bad attitudes, too many disagreements about how to teach, not enough materials and supplies, and too many responsibilities. It was also found that Potential Leavers are less likely than Non-Leavers to agree that they might leave due to personal health problems. More than 70 percent of the teachers in this study are under the age of 50; therefore, they might not consider personal health problems a plausible reason to leave teaching.

In the CNMI, 50 percent (N=10) of the school administrators agreed that they might leave educational administration within the next two years (Potential Leavers). Table 6 ranks the reasons school administrators gave for leaving the school administration field, and compares Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave educational administration altogether within the next two years."

In the CNMI, the top reason for leaving school administration is retirement. This reason was ranked first by school administrators who were planning to leave, as well as by those who were not. In addition, both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers had similar rankings for many of the other reasons. A statistical test (Fisher Exact Test) was performed to find out whether the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different for each possible reason for leaving school administration. Following Cochran (1954), the Fisher Exact Test was used because of the small sample size (N=20). Potential Leavers were found to be less

likely to leave because of the following reasons: no support from school staff, pressure from the community, poor relationship with teachers, and poor relationship with staff. Other reasons underlie the desire to leave school administration.

Table 6

Reasons for Leaving Administration in the CNMI: Comparison of Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers

If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of ...	Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions	25.0	7	40.0	7
no support from school staff *	0.0	9	60.0	5
no support from central office administration	50.0	4	88.9	2
too much stress	50.0	4	50.0	6
poor relationships with parents	12.5	8	30.0	8
students' bad attitudes	25.0	7	0.0	9
my lack of control over school policies	37.5	6	30.0	8
poor benefits	57.1	3	60.0	5
personal health problems	37.5	6	80.0	3
too many disagreements about how to run my school	25.0	7	50.0	6
not enough school materials and supplies	50.0	4	40.0	7
low salaries	87.5	2	70.0	4
too many responsibilities	50.0	4	40.0	7
pressure from the community *	0.0	9	40.0	7
retirement	100.0	1	90.0	1
promotion	37.5	6	60.0	5
poor relationship with teachers *	0.0	9	40.0	7
poor relationship with staff *	0.0	9	40.0	7
political reasons	44.4	5	40.0	7

* $p < .10$

The relationship between stress, burnout, and reported desire to leave education was examined in order to provide assistance to program managers and staff developers who work to improve school climate.

1. *A high degree of burnout* is reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

2. A *medium degree of burnout* is reflected in moderate scores on the three subscales.

3. A *low degree of burnout* is reflected in low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Table 7 reflects a comparison of mean scores for all teacher and school administrator respondents, with scores from the norm sample of K-12 teachers. These scores indicate that CNMI teachers and school administrators have a higher sense of personal accomplishment than the norm sample. In addition, they are not as emotionally exhausted and do not feel as depersonalized as those in the norm sample. Therefore, in the CNMI, the majority of educators do not appear to experience occupational burnout.

Table 7

MBI Subscale Mean Scores for CNMI Teachers and School Administrators Compared to the Norm Sample

MBI Subscale	Sample Size	Mean Score
Personal Accomplishment (PA)		
CNMI Teachers	332	38.5
CNMI School Administrators	20	39.7
Norm Sample	4,163	33.5
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)		
CNMI Teachers	332	20.9
CNMI School Administrators	20	18.5
Norm Sample	4,163	21.3
Depersonalization (DP)		
CNMI Teachers	332	5.4
CNMI School Administrators	20	5.1
Norm Sample	4,163	11.0

In order to analyze how Potential Leavers compare to Non-Leavers on the MBI subscales, scores were classified into High, Moderate, and Low categories. To make interpretation easier, the suggested cut-off scores used by MBI authors to classify low and high Personal Accomplishment were reversed. That is, a high score in this report means a high sense of personal accomplishment. According to the authors (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), personal accomplishment is a reverse scale, which means high scores denote a high lack of personal accomplishment. We found this to be confusing and, thus, made these changes for our reporting purposes. The following cut-off scores were used:

Table 8

Cut-Off Scores for MBI Subscale Categories

MBI Subscale	High	Moderate	Low
Personal Accomplishment	≥ 37	31-36	≤ 30
Emotional Exhaustion	≥ 27	17-26	≤ 16
Depersonalization	≥ 14	9-13	≤ 8

Figures 1-6 display differences between Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers among teachers (Figures 1-3) and school administrators (Figures 4-6) on the three MBI subscales. For both teachers and school administrators, the patterns are the same. Those who may leave have a lower sense of personal accomplishment, are more emotionally exhausted, and feel depersonalized at work. Thus, Potential Leavers appear to experience occupational burnout.

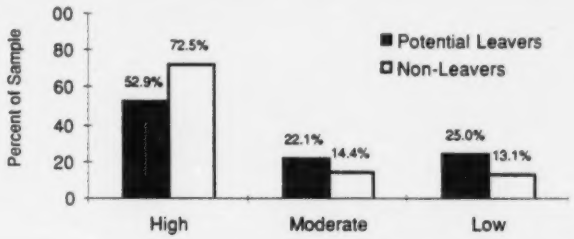

Figure 1. **Personal accomplishment among teachers in the CNMI**

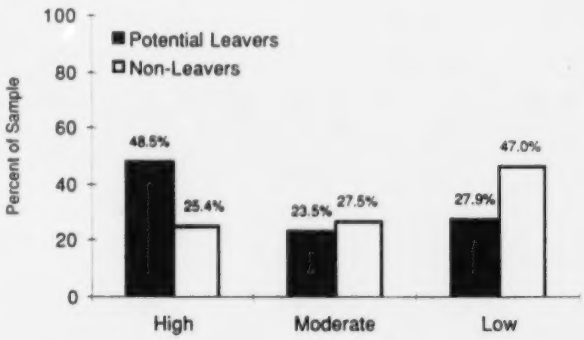

Figure 2. **Emotional exhaustion among teachers in the CNMI**

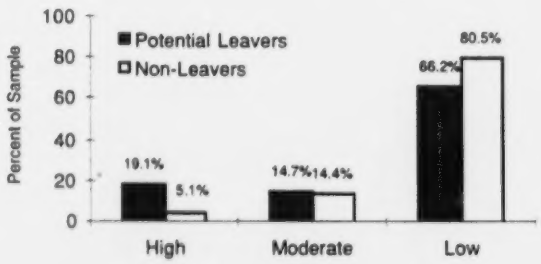

Figure 3. **Depersonalization among teachers in the CNMI**

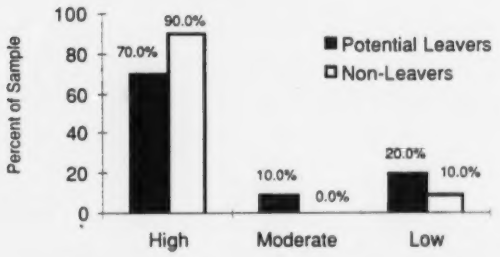

Figure 4. **Personal accomplishment among school administrators in the CNMI**

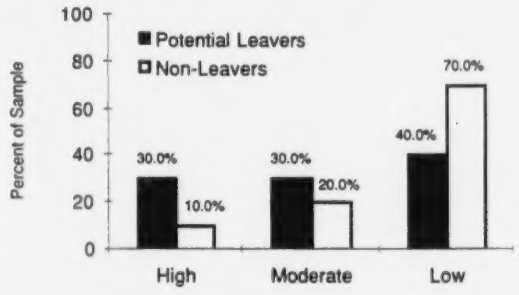

Figure 5. **Emotional exhaustion among school administrators in the CNMI**

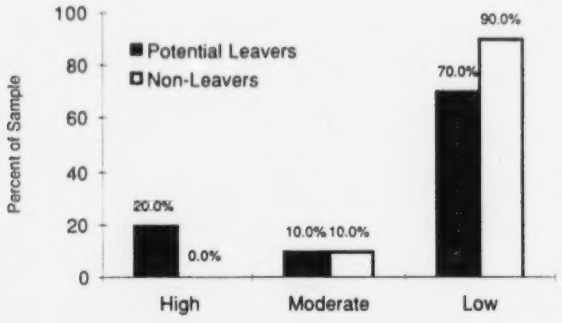

Figure 6. **Depersonalization among school administrators in the CNMI**

IV. Discussion

Absenteeism

Absenteeism among teachers and school administrators in the CNMI does not appear to be a problem. For example, the average number of days away from school for teachers (6.87) is among the lowest in the entities. Reasons for absences are those one would expect: personal illness, vacation, meetings and workshops, and funerals. These are factors associated with absenteeism that tend to be of immediate concern to teachers (Scott & Wimbush, 1991).

The top reasons why school administrators spend time away from school are meetings and training. Attending meetings and workshops is a part of the professional routine for school administrators, and it is not uncommon in the CNMI PSS for school administrators to be called away from their schools to attend meetings and workshops that may last for several days.

Attrition

The top reasons for leaving, given by CNMI teachers who may leave within the next two years, include: too much stress, students' bad attitudes, disagreements about how to teach, not enough school materials and supplies, and too many responsibilities. Because many of the teachers in the PSS are from the U.S. Mainland, they may be uncomfortable with or unaware of cultural norms and practices in the CNMI. This potential culture clash might lead to certain behaviors, interactions, and conditions being

perceived in a negative light, while individuals from indigenous cultures find them acceptable. Cultural differences can lead to stress and disagreements over how to teach.

For school administrators, the top reason for leaving–retirement–is cited as number one by both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers. More than 50 percent of the principals in the CNMI are nearing retirement, due to either years of service or years of age. Therefore, both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are likely to cite retirement as a reason for leaving the public school system.

Burnout

In the CNMI, teachers and school administrators, in general, experience less burnout than their Mainland counterparts. They exhibit a higher sense of personal accomplishment, are less emotionally exhausted, and experience lesser degrees of depersonalization than the norm sample. However, those who might leave within the next two years are experiencing more burnout than those who plan to stay. This may be due in part to stress resulting from "students' bad attitudes," a significant reason cited by teachers for leaving (Table 5), and a stress/burnout factor that is associated with student misbehavior (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Pelletier, 1977; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). These teachers and school administrators (Potential Leavers) exhibit a lower sense of personal accomplishment, are more emotionally exhausted, and feel a stronger sense of depersonalization than their non-leaving counterparts. Thus, in the CNMI, high teacher turnover may be due, in part, to occupational burnout.

V. Limitations

The Challenge of Language and Culture

Conducting research across diverse linguistic and cultural groups is a challenging task. The language in which research is conducted can limit accurate interpretation of its results. Expectations regarding task importance and response candor may vary from culture to culture. Thus, results from cross-cultural studies may be difficult to interpret.

While English is the language of wider communication in all of the American-affiliated Pacific entities, respondents to the surveys in this study varied in their use and comprehension of English. For some, English might be a first language; for others, it might be a second or third language, used to a much lesser extent than the vernacular. Thus, particular vocabulary, grammatical structures, or instructions may have been problematic.

To adjust for some for these potential errors in measurement, native language/culture informants, who are members of the R&D Cadre or entity local support teams, provided the following expert assistance:

- developed and piloted questions used in the survey;
- revised potentially confusing items from the Maslach instrument;
- in many cases, administered surveys in group settings, leading respondents through each item and clarifying meanings upon request; and
- provided translations, where necessary, especially in geographically isolated outer-island settings.

Culture-specific interpretations concerning the importance of research, ways of responding, and the meanings of specific terms might all affect results. R&D Cadre members made special efforts to work with their respective departments or ministries of education and directors to ensure that teachers and school administrators took their responses to the survey seriously. In many cases, entity-wide meetings were held to explain the study, its importance, and the need for truthful data. Because the study was

designed by members of each department of education, and was intended to investigate issues of importance to the entity, some support was ensured. The study was discussed at principals' and teachers' meetings; support for administration and data collection was provided by the entity department or ministry of education.

Instrumentation

All data collected in this study came from self-report questionnaires. This method of data collection was selected because of its perceived advantages for large-scale research. Those advantages include:

- Questionnaires are relatively easy and inexpensive to administer
- Questionnaires can be designed to ensure anonymity
- Respondents answer at their own pace
- Questions are standardized

However, self-report questionnaires also have limitations—responses may not always be truthful or accurate. Some respondents might make careless errors, such as checking the wrong box or writing the incorrect number. They might purposely answer questions with incorrect information because they want to give a favorable impression or avoid potentially embarrassing admissions. Or, they might misinterpret questions and respond inaccurately.

The R&D Cadre pilot-tested the questionnaires in order to improve wording so that respondents might better interpret the meanings of questions. Additionally, directions for completing the questionnaires and administration procedures were purposefully designed to ensure anonymity. However, even with these precautions, hindsight tells us that specific changes might have improved the validity of responses. In particular, the following limitations are noted:

1. Items that required respondents to check boxes on the right were somewhat confusing. The items should have been transposed so that the boxes were on the left.
2. Questions measuring attrition could have been phrased with greater clarity. Rather than asking if the respondents might leave and reasons that might cause them to leave, perhaps asking whether or not they were going to leave and why would have provided more definitive information.
3. In order to assure respondents of anonymity and foster truthfulness in responses, surveys did not ask for individuals' names. However, they did request the names of schools. In entities where there are few schools and a limited number of teachers (e.g., one per grade level), this may not have been sufficient to guarantee anonymity, and, consequently, honesty in response.

Analysis

Non-responses to items on the questionnaires could limit the validity of some results. For example, in order to analyze differences between teachers who are Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers, only those who responded to the question "I might leave teaching within the next two years" and each of the reasons for leaving could be included in the analyses (cross-tabulations). In some instances, large portions of the sample did not respond to either the "I might leave" question or one of the reasons.

Therefore, conclusions based on such results may only be generalized on the basis of those who were willing to respond. There may be systematic differences between respondents and non-respondents. For example, if non-respondents were more likely to experience depersonalization at work and, therefore, did not care to respond to all items, then conclusions based on results in which they did not participate would under-identify this risk factor in the population.

Although standardized group administration practices included requests to respond to all items,

these requests were not sufficient. Moreover, standardized administration was not always possible.

Non-responses on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were also a problem. In order to calculate each subscale score, all items that contributed to that subscale must have been answered. If a respondent left one item out, the subscale in which that item was included could not be computed. Therefore, the extent of burnout may be underrepresented.

VI. Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this section of the report are based on the general findings concerned with absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in the CNMI. Findings in three areas are highlighted: (1) reasons for absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition in the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Absenteeism

Across the region, the CNMI has the highest average number of days that school administrators are away from school because of meetings and workshops. They are away from school, on average, for almost 14 days per year, with more than half of these absences due to meetings and workshops. Although attending meetings and workshops is an unavoidable part of an educator's professional life, the frequency of school administrators' attendance at meetings and workshops should be critically assessed. Perhaps meetings could be facilitated by including a set agenda sent out ahead of time, so that school administrators come to the meetings with all the necessary materials. All meetings should be well planned and conducted in the interest of saving time.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Attrition

1. The schools in the CNMI reflect the commonwealth's multi-ethnic composition, which is partly a result of immigration policies. Indigenous populations (those of Chamorro and Carolinian ancestry) make up 73 percent of the student population, with an additional 12 percent from Micronesian entities and 13 percent from Asian countries. Teachers, however, are predominantly Caucasian (46%). Limited awareness and knowledge of the cultures and inhabitants in the CNMI creates stress for teachers, and this might be a contributing factor in the entity's high teacher-turnover rate. For recently arrived teachers, an in-depth orientation to the islands' cultures, people, and practices should be made available as part of the induction process. This might help to alleviate some of the initial apprehension, anxiety, and shock that many new teachers experience upon their arrival in the CNMI. The problems of misinformation and faulty perceptions among the newcomers can also be addressed at this time.

2. Priority and resources are needed to develop a larger local teacher pool that can meet the needs of students in the CNMI. A larger local teacher pool will reduce the need to recruit teachers from the U.S. Mainland, thereby saving recruitment costs.

3. To contribute to staff stability, a pro-active program that will reduce the attrition rate of teachers and administrators should be designed and implemented by CNMI Public School System (PSS). Staff stability, in turn, could contribute to better student performance and achievement.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Stress/Burnout

1. Practices to help reduce stress/burnout among new teachers might include inter-cultural communication training that fosters cross-cultural understanding between teachers and the cultural groups they serve. Improved cross-cultural understanding might lead to less stress and burnout for teachers. In the CNMI, high teacher turnover may be due, in part, to teacher burnout.

2. A comprehensive program to reduce stress and burnout among educators in the PSS should be designed and implemented. Such a program may contribute to improved attendance and a sense of well-being for those professionals who work most closely with students.

3. Finally, the Maslach Burnout Inventory indicated that, in general, both teachers and school administrators in the Pacific entities experience less stress than their Mainland counterparts. Perhaps the concepts of stress and burnout are different in the Pacific than on the Mainland. This possible area of research may provide insights into the psychological construct of burnout as it plays out in culturally diverse contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: RAPSTA Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix B: RAPSTA School Administrator Questionnaire

Appendix A

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

Teacher Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

April 1997

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
Teacher Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause teachers to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

School:_____ **Date:** _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai'i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field of study: _____
(Examples: Elementary Education, Math, Science, Agriculture, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Years of teaching experience:
1 - 4 5 - 10 11 - 14 15 - 20 21 or more

What grades do you currently teach?
(check all that apply)
How many students do you teach?
(put in number per grade level)

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

For elementary teachers who teach in self-contained settings, please check the subject areas you are currently teaching.

✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)	✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)
	Language Arts/English		Art
	Language Arts/Vernacular		Music
	Math		Health
	Science		Physical Education
	Social Studies		Guidance
	Other (specify)		Other (specify)

For secondary teachers who teach in departmentalized settings, please check the subject area(s) and number of class periods you are currently teaching.

	Number of class periods you teach (put a ✓ in the appropriate columns)						
Subject area(s) you teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Language Arts/English							
Language Arts/Vernacular							
Math							
Science							
Social Studies							
Vocational Education (specify)							
Business Education							
Computers							
Art							
Music							
Physical Education							
Other (specify)							

If you have had jobs other than teaching, please list them below.

Previous employment other than teaching	Number of years

Total number of instructional days you were away from school this year (SY '96 -'97):

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure teachers' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey*** *by Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, & Richard L. Schwab. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes teachers leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a teaching job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement. Please respond to all statements.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years.				
I might leave teaching all together within the next two years.				
If I quit teaching, it would be because of . . .				
poor working conditions.				
no support from school administration.				
no support from central office administration.				
too much stress.				
poor relationships with parents.				
students' bad attitudes.				
my lack of control over school policies.				
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).				
personal health problems.				
too many disagreements about how to teach.				
not enough school materials and supplies.				
low salaries.				
too many responsibilities.				
pressure from the community.				
retirement.				
promotion.				
poor relationship with other teachers.				

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this questionnaire to the large envelope which has been placed on one of the desks in the room.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

School Administrator Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

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Appendix B: RAPSTA School Administrator Questionnaire

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
School Administrator Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause school administrators to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

Date: _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai`i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field(s) of study: _____
(Examples: School Administration, Curriculum & Instruction, Elementary Education, Math, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Total school enrollment: _____

Students enrolled by grade:
What is the student enrollment at your school by grade?

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Your current position:
principal vice-principal head teacher
teaching principal teaching vice-principal

In the space below, please describe your training in school administration.

Please indicate the number of years of teaching and administrative experience you have had.

	Number of years by level		
	Elem./Int. (K-8)	**High Sch. (9-12)**	**College**
teacher			
head teacher			
teaching department head			
teaching vice-principal			
vice-principal			
teaching principal			
principal			

If you are a teaching principal/teaching vice-principal, please check the subject area(s) and number of class periods you are currently teaching.

	Number of class periods you teach (put a ✓ in the appropriate columns)						
Subject area(s) you teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Language Arts/English							
Language Arts/Vernacular							
Math							
Science							
Social Studies							
Vocational Education (specify)							
Business Education							
Computers							
Art							
Music							
Physical Education							
Other (specify)							

If you have had jobs other than teaching and/or school administration, please list them below.

Previous employment other than teaching or school administration	Number of years

Total number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97:

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure school administrators' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Human Services Survey*** *by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

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SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes school administrators leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a school administrator's job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better school administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better central office administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave educational administration all together within the next two years.				
If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of . . .				
poor working conditions.				
no support from school staff.				
no support from central office administration.				
too much stress.				
poor relationships with parents.				
students' bad attitudes.				
my lack of control over school policies.				
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).				
personal health problems.				
too many disagreements about how to run my school.				
not enough school materials and supplies.				
low salaries.				
too many responsibilities.				
pressure from the community.				
retirement.				
promotion.				
poor relationship with teachers.				
poor relationship with staff.				
political reasons.				

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this questionnaire to the large envelope which has been placed on one of the desks in the room.

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